

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic River

Corridor Description

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic River includes corridors that stretch for 78.1 miles along the East Branch, Middle Branch and West Branch of the Westfield River (see map). The corridor width is 200 feet wide from mean high water, corresponding to the width of the Massachusetts River Protection Act.

- 5 miles of the headwater streams of the East Branch including Drowned Land, Center and Windsor Jambs Brooks (Windsor, Savoy)
- 28 miles of the East Branch (Savoy, Windsor, Cummington, Chesterfield, Huntington)
- 13 miles of the Middle Branch (Worthington, Middlefield, Chester, Huntington)
- 0.4 miles of Glendale Brook (Middlefield)
- 14 miles of the headwater streams of the West Branch including Shaker Mill, Depot, Savory, Watson and Center Pond Brooks (Becket, Washington)
- 16 miles of the West Branch (Becket, Middlefield, Chester)
- 0.8 miles of the Main Stem (Huntington).

Designated Reach: November 2, 1993. The designated segments include: the West Branch from a railway bridge 2000 feet downstream of the Becket Town Center to the Huntington/Chester town line; the Middle Branch from the Peru/Worthington town line downstream to the confluence with Kinne Brook in Chester; Gendale Brook; the East Branch from the Windsor/Cummington town line to the Knightville Reservoir.

Designated Reach: October 29, 2004. Shaker Mill Brook from Brooker Hill Road in Becket to its headwaters. The Upper East Branch from the Windsor/Cummington town line to its confluence; Upper East Branch Tributaries including Drowned Land Brook, Center Brook and Windsor Jambs Brook. Headwater tributaries of the West Branch, including Shaker Mill Brook from Brooker Hill Road in Becket to its confluence with the West Branch; Depot Brook; Savory Brook; Watson Brook; and Center Pond Brook from Center Pond to its confluence with the West Branch. The Lower Middle Branch, East Branch, and Main Stem in the Town of Huntington (3.2 miles) and the Upper East Branch from its confluence with Sykes Brook to its confluence with the West Branch.

Classification/Mileage: Wild -- 2.6 miles; Scenic -- 42.9 miles; Recreational -- 32.6 miles; Total -- 78.1 miles.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Westfield River

(Note: the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act [U.S.C. 1271-1287] has identified the following "outstandingly remarkable values" as applying to the Westfield River.)

- Scenic and geologic resources
- Historical resources
- Rare and Endangered Species
- Fisheries Resources

- Water Quality and Flow
- Recreational Resources

Background

In 1968, the United States Congress established a National Wild and Scenic Rivers system to protect outstanding rivers from the harmful effects of new federal projects, such as dams, hydroelectric facilities, bank stabilization and bridges. To be considered “Wild and Scenic” a river must have at least one “outstandingly remarkable” natural, cultural or recreational value pursuant to federal law (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287).

In 1993, after years of study, adding protective bylaws, working with landowners and residents of Becket, Chester, Middlefield, Chesterfield, Worthington and Cummington, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Westfield River Watershed Association, the Westfield River was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River.

The Wild and Scenic designation is meant to encourage owners, regional groups, citizens and all levels of government to act as stewards by promoting and protecting it. Initially, the creators of the Wild and Scenic River designation believed that certain steps could be taken together by the towns and the landowners. These include: voluntary conservation restrictions, increasing the maintenance at river access points, and grants for selected land acquisitions or improvements, riverbank beautification (clean up of trash, establishment and maintenance of buffers), salmon restoration, land acquisition and greenways.

Concerted efforts by municipalities, agencies, private landowners and others are required to protect this outstanding river, recognized as one of our national treasures, that includes 5 miles of the headwater streams of the East Branch including Drowned Land, Center and Windsor Jamb Brooks (Windsor, Savoy); 28 miles of the East Branch (Savoy, Windsor, Cummington, Chesterfield, Huntington); 13 miles of the Middle Branch (Worthington, Middlefield, Chester, Huntington); 0.4 miles of Glendale Brook (Middlefield); 14 miles of the headwater streams of the West Branch including Shaker Mill, Depot, Savory, Watson and Center Pond Brooks (Becket, Washington); 16 miles of the West Branch (Becket, Middlefield, Chester); and 0.8 miles of the Main Stem (Huntington).

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of the towns of Becket, Chesterfield, Cummington, Huntington, Middlefield, Savoy, Washington, Windsor, and Worthington as well as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the National Park Service, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Berkshire Planning Commission, The Trustees of Reservations and the Westfield River Watershed Association. Representatives are appointed by local elected officials, the Commonwealth or appropriate authorities in the organizations they represent. For more information on the Advisory Committee see www.nps.gov/rivers/wsr-westfield.html or contact WRWSAC, PO Box 397, Huntington, MA 01050.

Resources on this river include cold water fisheries, recreational amenities, historic resources, historic villages, unique geologic features, rare and endangered species and biodiversity habitat as well as being one of the largest roadless wilderness areas remaining in Massachusetts.

